

‘Jumping up cow’

Jake Reynolds founded Reynolds Riflery building and customizing rifles on the ethics of hunting his late father Dennis Reynolds instilled in him and his brothers

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

As far back as Jake Reynolds can remember, hunting season is what always brought his family together.

His father, two-term Grant County Judge Dennis Reynolds who died last year, taught him the importance of ethical hunting.

“A big emphasis of his hunting was how ethical you were with it when you’re harvesting an animal,” he said. “You’re preparing to take that animal’s life, and it’s going to give its life to support yours, and so you need to be very smart and treat it the right way.”

The set of moral standards Dennis Reynolds passed down to Jake and his brothers, Beau and Percy, is what pushed him to start building and selling custom rifles. Recently, Jake said, he became federally licensed to operate his business, Reynolds Riflery.

Jake recalled he was sick with guilt after he could not recover a bull he shot. While he said not being able to find the animal probably had more to do with his shooting than the stock, over-the-counter rifle, he still wanted to do more and treat the animals with respect.

“I wanted to do better,” he said. “I told myself this rifle could be better, and I want to do more in order to ethically treat these animals that are gonna be giving their life, in order to sustain my own.”

Reynolds said his idea was to build a rifle,



Contributed photo

Jake Reynolds works on one of his custom rifles at his shop, Reynolds Riflery, in Canyon City.

and he discussed it with both his father and his brother Beau.

At the time, Jake said, he was working at a gym in Portland after earning a degree in exercise science from Western Oregon University. He said he was not happy in Portland and found himself counting down the days to hunting season.

Jake said he spent all of his time working, researching and educating himself on crafting and customizing rifles. By the time hunting season rolled around, Jake said, he drew a pronghorn antelope tag and bagged it with his precision rifle.

“So that was what kind of got me started,” he said. “You know I had gone full circle there from the conception of the idea of a rifle that was going to be able to perform, do what I wanted to, a clean harvest.”

He said it was “cool and felt really good,” but deep down he knew he could do better on another custom-built rifle.

His next rifle, he said, has been used by other hunters to bag both an elk and deer.

“It’s amazing the performance that you can get with a precision-made rifle,” he said.

Reynolds said people started to take interest when he shot the rifle at the range and posted photos of the gun on Facebook. He said he was proud of his work.

“All of a sudden, it was a little bit of a change in the sense that people were interested in what I was doing,” he said. “I would get questions, ‘Where’d you get that,’ or ‘How much was that,

and did you pay for it?’”

He said it was “empowering” that people were interested in what he had to say.

Reynolds said he did some soul searching and decided to leave Portland and start working on the business. His mentor asked him what he could do 40 hours per week and be happy doing.

“I thought to myself, living in Portland and working at this gym is not that for sure,” he said. “That was almost immediate to me.”

Reynolds said he often stayed up late into the night working on rifles and enjoyed it.

Jake said his dad, who built precision rifles and loved hunting as well, was supportive of his plan to start the business.

“He would reach out to me and ask me a question about a gun, and I’d be like, ‘Wait, what?’” he said. “It was kind of one of those times where the padawan becomes the master.”

Jake said he was 12 years old when he shot his first buck on opening morning of hunting season on his grandmother’s Prairie City ranch.

Jake said he had practiced hunting side by side with his dad and had yet to pull the trigger. He said they had practiced everything from shot angles, entrance wounds, exit wounds and when to shoot and when not to shoot.

So when his father pointed out a buck that he needed to go up the cut bank to shoot, he knew to put the bullet in the animal’s front shoulder.

“After waiting 12 years to hunt, I didn’t know what to do because I shot him and he came running right down the hill, and I was on the train tracks and the train wasn’t stopping,” he said.

Jake said he pumped his magazine into the deer before diving out of the way.

Jake said, when he peeked over the bank, his dad, who did not say much, said, “jumping up cow.”

“I don’t know what that means,” Jake said.

As he got older, he figured out what his dad meant every time he told him “jumping up cow.”

It was his way, Jake said, of saying, “I’m proud of you.”

“It was just how he said things,” Jake said. “He wasn’t ever the person that would tell you directly that he was proud and that he loved you, even though he did. He didn’t speak it that way.”

“It was jumping up cow.”



Contributed photo
Tanni Wenger Photography
Jake Reynolds shooting at the range with a custom rifle he built.